



# Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi

## Washington Update

September 2003

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Dear Friend,

In January, when I was elected Minority Leader, I made security and prosperity for the American people the priority of House Democrats. Earlier this year, the safety of our men and women in uniform was put at risk to enter a war against Iraq. I opposed the war, but I added my voice without hesitation in support of the men and women who volunteered their lives for our country. We are proud of them, and we appreciate their bravery and patriotism.

Now we face the sobering process of the humanitarian rebuilding of post-war Iraq, which we cannot do alone. We also face the daunting prospect of building a foreign policy that will truly make us more secure. As we face these challenges abroad, we are experiencing an unemployment rate of more than six percent at home. As Minority Leader, I am working to achieve economic security, excellence in education for our children, access to quality health care, a safe environment, and true homeland security.

We are currently engaged in debate in Congress on obtaining a real prescription drug benefit for our seniors under Medicare. (Please see story on page 3.)

It is a privilege to represent San Francisco in Congress. I am pleased with our most recent success, obtaining funding for the BART to SFO extension. I always look forward to keeping you informed on activities in Congress and hearing your concerns and comments on issues affecting our community and country.

Nancy

## Unfinished Business: The Child Tax Credit

In May, Congress passed a tax bill that does not meet the needs of real families. In the short term, it will not get the economy moving again, and it will not make up for the three million jobs lost since the President took office. In the long term, it will hurt the economy and force working families to pay for exploding federal deficits over the next 10 years. These tax breaks mortgage our children's futures instead of investing further in their health and education.

The American people want and deserve an economic recovery plan that is fair, fast acting, and fiscally responsible. The Republican tax cuts fail on all three counts. But perhaps the most unfair aspect of the tax bill was the decision to leave out a child tax credit for America's working families. Republicans in Congress decided to drop this critical provision from the bill. Although the child tax credit was expanded for many Americans, 12 million children were left out, including children of men and women in uniform.

Democrats in Congress will continue to fight for a tax credit for these working families.



Rep. Pelosi rides the rails at the opening of the BART to SFO extension. The Congresswoman led the effort to obtain federal funding for this vital transportation project.

# We Must Set Goals For Homeland Security

As we commemorate the second anniversary of the September 11 attacks, terrorism remains the chief threat to our security. We must not lose sight of the fact that there are groups and individuals intent on conducting attacks within the United States.

The best way to improve the national and personal security of Americans is to set goals and then work to achieve them:

- To reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction from being developed by terrorists, we must acquire all weapons grade uranium and plutonium from the former Soviet Union.
- Each year 20 million shipping containers enter the United States. Most are not inspected. The technology is available now to establish inspection programs before ships reach ports and must be implemented.
- Currently, in many communities, police, fire, and other emergency services personnel cannot communicate among themselves, or with their colleagues in other jurisdictions. We must have standardized communications equipment for our first responders.
- Although passengers are screened at airports, there is no system in place to screen cargo on passenger airlines. We must correct this situation as soon as possible.
- We must allocate resources immediately to protect power grids, computer networks, and other critical infrastructures.

These goals, and many others like them, will be expensive, but are a small price to pay for safety.

## The Administration Undermining Environmental Progress

Quietly but quickly, and with the backing of Republican supporters in Congress, President Bush is rolling back more than three decades of bipartisan progress on protecting the environment. While adopting pro-environment rhetoric, the Administration is pursuing policies that will have an adverse effect on our environment for years to come.

A common Administration tactic is to weaken environmental regulations, because changes in regulations rarely make the nightly news but have a profound effect on the environment. For example, in a significant loss of protection for wilderness areas, the Administration is opening the door to widespread road-building on most public lands.

Another Administration strategy is to announce a new plan with a catchy name that appears to help the environment, such as its “Clear Skies” legislation (H.R. 999 and S. 485), but actually sets back environmental progress. The Administration claims this proposal will give us cleaner air by reducing smog, fine particles, and mercury. In fact, “Clear Skies” is weaker than the laws currently on the books.

A third tactic is to claim that environmental laws are actually harming our country. The Administration says the Defense Department needs exemptions from five of our major environmental laws – laws that protect the air, water, endangered species, whales, dolphins, and humans – because these laws are interfering with military readiness. Yet a recent study by the Government Accounting Office could find no evidence that environmental laws are hampering the military.

I will continue to do all that I can to fight environmental rollbacks, and I will continue to use my leadership position in Congress to fight for clean air, clean water, and a safe environment.



Rep. Lynn Woolsey (CA) presents Rep. Pelosi with the California League of Conservation Voters Environmental Leadership award for her staunch defense of America's natural resources.

# America's Seniors Deserve Better

On July 19, more than 200 seniors participated in a town hall meeting at the Mission Neighborhood Centers to discuss the Medicare prescription drug bills recently passed by both the House and Senate. The seniors came to discuss their experiences with Medicare, to listen to health care experts and seniors' advocates, and to talk about the benefits they want and need.

This meeting was one of 70 held that day by House Democrats across the country to educate seniors about the significant inadequacies in the Medicare prescription drug bills passed by Republicans in Congress.

We believe that these bills are deeply flawed and would leave many of the 40 million seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare worse off than they are today. There should be no mistake: these "Medicare reform" plans will begin the unraveling of the Medicare program seniors know and trust.

A recent study by the non-profit Consumers Union underscores the minimal benefits of the GOP plans. According to the report, beneficiaries with average drug costs and no private coverage will spend around \$2,300 this year. By 2007, if either the House or the Senate bill takes effect, seniors will pay at least \$2,500. In other words, the average Medicare beneficiary would spend more, not less, on prescription drugs than they do now. That's not progress.

Both the House and Senate bills contain a "coverage gap" so wide that nearly half of the elderly on Medicare would fall into it, leaving millions of seniors to bear 100 percent of whatever an HMO sees fit to charge for drugs – even as they continue to pay premiums. This, apparently, is their idea of "new benefits" or "improving Medicare" – forcing the elderly to pay more for an inadequate drug benefit. After years of waiting for help with the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs, America's seniors deserve better.

As House and Senate negotiators work out the differences between the two bills, House Democrats insist that a responsible prescription drug benefit meet several critical standards.

First, any prescription drug benefit must be affordable. Premiums and deductibles should be reasonable and the legislation must be designed to significantly reduce the high cost of drugs. Most importantly, seniors should not be subjected to huge gaps in coverage.

Second, it must offer a defined, guaranteed benefit. Prescription drugs must be covered like other Medicare benefits, with guaranteed coverage of drugs prescribed by doctors.

Third, a prescription drug benefit should be within the Medicare program that seniors have known and trusted for nearly four decades.

Finally, the same drug benefit and premiums must be available to all seniors and disabled Americans in Medicare no matter where they live or what their incomes are.

There is still time to do this right. We must secure the defined, guaranteed benefit that seniors expect and deserve.

# Global AIDS Bill A Vital Step Forward

The passage of the global AIDS bill by the Congress is a vital step forward in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It strengthens our commitment to a future where AIDS is no longer a threat. This legislation authorizes \$15 billion for our multilateral and bilateral efforts and will improve coordination among relevant U.S. agencies.

I have deep concerns, however, about a provision that gives abstinence programs a third of prevention funding. This crisis is too severe and our response is too critical to shift funds into scientifically unproven programs.

The promises made in the bill must also be matched by real resources. Prevention and treatment require money. We must now appropriate the funds necessary to enact this plan and demonstrate the depth of our commitment to the world.

While the bill authorizes \$3 billion in fiscal year 2004, President Bush's budget provides only \$1.6 billion next year, with just \$200 million going to the Global Fund to Combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. We can and must do better.

The fight against AIDS is far from over. Experts say that a robust global response could prevent nearly two-thirds of the 45 million new infections that are projected by 2020, saving tens of millions of lives. U.S. leadership is essential.



Rep. Pelosi met with panelists at the town hall meeting: Barbara Garcia, Deputy Director, SF Dept. of Public Health, Dr. Phil Lee, Former Asst. Sec. of Health and Human Services, UCSF, Ruth Miller, and Ed Coyle, Executive Director, Alliance for Retired Americans. They discussed including a guaranteed, affordable prescription drug benefit under Medicare.



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Presorted Standard

Nancy Pelosi

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Official Business

# Appropriations Update

As your Representative in Congress, I continue to fight for San Francisco’s priorities in the budget. Below are just a few of the projects that were funded in fiscal year 2003 to meet the needs of San Franciscans, improve local infrastructure, and enhance the civic life of our City:

## Transportation and Infrastructure

- \$100 million for extending BART to SFO;
- \$6.2 million for projects to restore San Francisco Bay wetlands;
- \$5 million for a new security operations center at San Francisco International Airport;
- \$4.25 million for Golden Gate Bridge seismic retrofits; and
- \$1.5 million to begin the Central Subway segment of the Third Street Light Rail project.



Rep. Pelosi meets with Young Community Developers members Dwayne Jones, John Williams, Rodney Hampton, Alyssa Jones, Darlington Nwaokoro, and Kyaira Johnson to discuss their program to protect the environment and create jobs.

## Health

In addition to securing millions of dollars in funding for HIV/AIDS and public health, our office was successful in achieving the following appropriations:

- \$750,000 for HIV/AIDS services for people of color and women through the San Francisco Department of Public Health;
- \$750,000 for housing services to homeless individuals facing mental health and substance abuse problems;
- \$400,000 for poor and homeless mothers and families through the San Francisco Homeless Prenatal Program;
- \$400,000 for Walden House to renovate a local substance abuse treatment facility;
- \$325,000 for The Breast Cancer Fund to provide support services to low-income women diagnosed with breast cancer;
- \$250,000 for Friendship House Assoc. of American Indians to expand their substance abuse treatment center; and
- \$250,000 to Glide Memorial Methodist Church for construction of the Glide Health Clinic.

## Community

- Young Community Developers received funding for their environmental remediation workforce development program, which will provide critical environmental services and create job opportunities for minority and disabled residents of low-income neighborhoods;
- The Bay Area Video Coalition received funds to provide access to web-based technology for low-income housing residents, helping them build assets and raise their standard of living; and
- The Mission Education Projects, Inc., received funding for after school education projects for children and their families that focus on academic development and instruction in practical knowledge and life skills.

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